



Economic Research Service

Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program

Final Report: Fiscal Year 1998 Activities

Mission: Research for a Healthy, Well-Nourished America



*Food Assistance &
Nutrition Research*



Food Assistance & Nutrition Research

Mission: Research for a Healthy, Well-Nourished America

Program at a Glance

USDA's Economic Research Service (ERS) was given responsibility for conducting studies and evaluations of the Nation's domestic food and nutrition assistance programs, including the Food Stamp Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the Child Nutrition Programs. The Agriculture Appropriations Act (P.L. 105-86) provided \$18.495 million in fiscal year 1998 for these activities.

In developing its research program, ERS worked extensively with program and research staff in the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the agency responsible for administering the Department's food assistance and nutrition programs. ERS also sought input from a broad constituency of policy officials, researchers, practitioners, advocates, industry groups, and service providers to identify and develop the research priorities. In conjunction with these activities, ERS sponsored a workshop, convened under the auspices of the National Research Council of the National Academy of Sciences, to identify critical research and information needs that would support food assistance and nutrition programs. The culmination of these efforts was the establishment in ERS of the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP).

In fiscal year 1998, its first year of mandated responsibility, FANRP funded a portfolio of extramural research projects designed to meet the critical information needs of the program managers, policy officials, the research community, and the public at large. The program included grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts that were competitively awarded through a tightly run peer review process. Peer reviewers included experts from academia, government, and the private sector. This report provides a brief summary and overview.

Program Contacts and Website

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Program Highlights

Major FANRP research efforts undertaken during fiscal 1998 include:

- Three Congressionally mandated studies:
 - State Use of Funds To Increase Work Slots for Food Stamp Recipients
 - Use of Food Stamps To Purchase Dietary Supplements
 - Study of Meal Reimbursement Changes for Family Day Care Homes
- Research on welfare reform's impact on USDA's food and nutrition programs, including assessing the status of households who leave the Food Stamp Program, examining the interactions with other welfare programs, and assessing the implications of administrative changes in welfare offices for food stamp clients.
- Research on the two groups of food stamp recipients most affected by welfare reform: able bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) and legal immigrants.
- Technical assistance to States in analyzing the potential effects of exercising various options of the Simplified Food Stamp Program.
- Research on the policy-sensitive issues of waste, fraud, and abuse in the Food Stamp Program, including a study to update the estimate of the food stamp trafficking and another focusing on the use of computer matching to detect program fraud.
- Enhanced food assistance data collection efforts through partnerships in several nationwide surveys, including the Continuing Survey of Food Intake by Individuals (CSFII), Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID), and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study.
- A comprehensive study to assess what is known about the dietary and health outcomes of USDA's food and nutrition assistance programs.
- A small grants program administered by five academic institutions and affiliated research institutes to broaden the participation of social science scholars in food assistance research. Each institute focused on a different research issue. A total of 23 small research grants were competitively awarded by the following institutions:
 - The Joint Center for Poverty Research at the University of Chicago and Northwestern University;
 - The Institute for Research on Poverty (IRP) at the University of Wisconsin;
 - The American Indian Studies Program at the University of Arizona;
 - The Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State and Alcorn State Universities; and
 - The Department of Nutrition at the University of California at Davis.

Program Themes and Projects Funded

The following is an abbreviated list of projects funded under FANRP (see Table 1 for research abstracts):

Welfare Reform

- Family Child Care Homes Legislative Changes Study
- Use of Food Stamps to Purchase Dietary Supplements
- State Use of Funds to Increase Work Slots for Food Stamp Recipients
- Expanded Study of Welfare Reform on Immigrants
- Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)—Leavers Use of Food Stamps
- Studies of Households Who Leave the Food Stamp Program
- U.S. Emergency Food Assistance System: Provider and Recipient Characteristics
- Food Program Targeting and Delivery
- Program Forecasting and Budget Analysis
- Changes in Food Stamp Program Administration Processes Related to Welfare Reform
- Simplified Food Stamp Program Technical Assistance
- The Extent of Trafficking in the Food Stamp Program after Welfare Reform

Food Security

- Measuring Food Security: August 1998 Current Population Survey Supplement
- Research to Strengthen and Improve Measures of Food Security
- Second Conference on Food Security

Nutrition and Health

- WIC and Childhood Development Studies
 - ✓ Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort 2000
 - ✓ Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Kindergarten Cohort
- Dietary and Nutrition Outcomes (Nutrition Risk Follow-up)
- Evaluating Food Stamp Nutrition Education
- Research to Assess Links Between Diet Quality and Health
- Development and Evaluation of the Nutritional Anthropometric Assessment Software in WIC Clinics (Epi Info 2000/Nustat Module)
- Research on Breastfed Infants' Growth
- Nutritional Advantages of Including More Beef, Lamb, and Chevron Meats in the National School Lunch Program

Program Integrity and Effectiveness

- Assessment of Computer Matching in the Food Stamp Program
- The Evaluation of EBT Customer Service Waivers on Recipients
- Nutrition and Health Outcomes of USDA Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs

Research Outreach

- Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Small Grants Programs
 - ✓ Southern Rural Development Center, Mississippi State University
 - Economic Downturns and Welfare Reform: An Exploratory County-Level Analysis*
 - The Impact of Food Stamp Reforms on the Elderly in Mississippi*
 - Assessing the Benefits and Problems Associated with the Use of Electronic Benefits Transfer for Food Stamps in Macon County, Alabama*
 - Private Food Assistance in East Alabama*
 - Understanding Hunger and Food Insecurity in Kentucky*
 - From Welfare to Wage Work*
 - ✓ The American Indian Studies Program (AISP), University of Arizona
 - Assessment of Food Concerns, Nutrition Knowledge, and Food Security of Oglala Lakota College Students on the Pine Ridge Reservation*
 - A Dietary History and Behavior Study on the Cheyenne River Reservation*
 - The Impact of Food Assistance Programs on American Indian Reservations: The Northern Cheyenne Case Study*
 - Federal Food Programs, Traditional Foods, and the Gros Ventre and Assiniboine Nations of the Fort Belknap Indian Reservation*
 - Monitoring Health and Nutrition of the Navajo Nation*
 - ✓ University of Wisconsin, Institute for Research on Poverty
 - Independent Validation of the Core Food Security Measure with Asian and Pacific Islanders*
 - A Macro-Level Analysis of the Private Food Assistance Network*
 - Food Insecurity and Immigrant Wellbeing: Mexican Immigrants to the United States*
 - Effects of Participation in Food Assistance Programs: Evidence from NLSY Children*
 - ✓ The Joint Center for Poverty Research, University of Chicago and Northwestern University
 - Immigration and the Food Assistance Program*
 - State Budgetary Behavior and the Fiscal Interactions Between Food Stamps, AFDC, Medicaid, and SSI*
 - Does the Minimum Wage Affect AFDC and Food Stamp Participation?*
 - The Effects of Food Stamp and WIC Participation and Their Effects on Low-Income Families with Young Children*
 - The Consequences of Food Insecurity for Child Well-Being: An Analysis of Children's Health and School Behavior Outcomes*
 - ✓ Department of Nutrition, University of California at Davis
 - Impact of Food Insecurity and Food Assistance Program Participation on Nutritional Risk and Functional Impairment in the Elderly*
 - Relationships Between Participation in Food Assistance Programs and Skeletal Health*
 - Influence of Food Stamps on the Nutritional Status of Inner-City Preschoolers from Hartford, CT, Who Receive WIC Benefits*
- Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC): Research Information Dissemination

Policy Research

- Food Stamp Program Microsimulation and Related Analysis
- WIC General Analysis Project
- Child Nutrition Analysis Projects

Enhanced Data Development

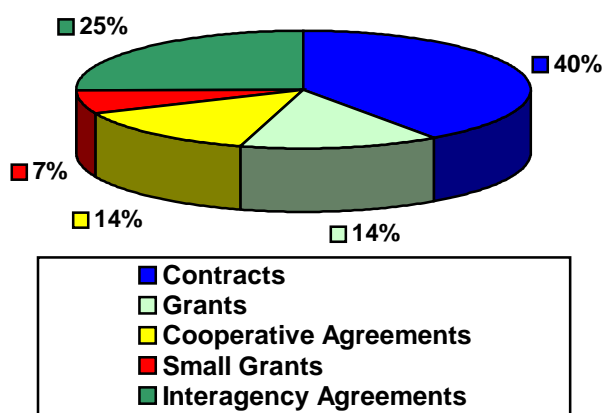
- Continuing Survey of Food Intake by Individuals
- Panel Study of Income Dynamics
- National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey
- National Food Price and Sales Information System

Competitively Funded Extramural Research Program

To meet the programmatic needs of the Department and to promote innovative research from a broad area of experts, a variety of funding mechanisms was used to implement the program. In general, when the research requested specific information, such as Congressionally mandated studies, contracts were used. When the intent was to stimulate new and innovative research or to undertake projects conducted jointly with ERS researchers, cooperative agreements and grants were used. The extramural research program was publicly announced through mass mailings and Internet dissemination and the awards were made competitively through the use of peer review panels.

Five contracts were awarded in the areas of nutrition and health outcomes of USDA's food assistance programs, changes in the Food Stamp Program administration processes related to welfare reform, evaluation of electronic benefits transfer (EBT) waivers, and a national survey of the U.S. emergency food assistance system. Another five research projects were funded as options under existing FNS contracts. Funding for contracts totaled \$7.25 million.

Share of Extramural Awards by Type, FY 1998



The competitive cooperative agreement and grant program focused on three major research topics: (1) diet and nutrition outcomes; (2) food program targeting and delivery; and (3) program forecasting and budget analysis. The program was announced widely, with about 700 program announcements mailed out to universities, nonprofit and for-profit organizations, and State and local governments. In addition, the announcement was posted on the Internet through the ERS website and several list servers. Funding for cooperative agreements totaled \$2.46 million in fiscal 1998. In addition to the cooperative agreements, a total of five grants were awarded. Four grants were awarded to conduct research on the economic status and wellbeing of households who leave the Food Stamp Program after the implementation of welfare reform and one grant was awarded to conduct research on breastfed infants' growth. Funding for grants totaled \$2.59 million.

A small grants program was developed and targeted at academic institutions and affiliated research institutes to stimulate new and innovative research and to broaden the participation of social science scholars in food assistance research. Five institutes were selected with each focusing on a particular facet of food assistance, such as diet and health outcomes, relationships to poverty and wellbeing, rural issues, and special at-risk population groups. Funding for small grants totaled \$1.19 million.

Interagency agreements were used to enhance food assistance data development through cost-sharing partnerships and to fund cooperative interagency research on program interactions and policy issues. These interagency projects include the Continuing Survey of Food Intake by Individuals, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, the Panel Study of Income Dynamics, and the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort and Kindergarten Cohort. Funding for interagency agreements totaled \$4.54 million.

Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Related Reports

Please visit the ERS website at www.econ.ag.gov for all the published reports relating to the economics of food choice, nutrient intake and diet quality to key clients and the public. Most recently available at ERS include:

Breastfeeding Promotion Research. The ES/WIC Nutrition Education Initiative and Economic Considerations. AIB-744. USDA, ERS, September 1998.

Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program: A Blueprint for Success with Updated Project Status. USDA, ERS, Sept. 1998.

Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program: Spring Update. USDA, ERS, May 1998.

Food Procurement by USDA's Farm Service Agency. AER-766. USDA, ERS, September 1998.

FoodReview. Perspectives on Welfare Reform, Vol. 21 Issue 1, USDA, ERS, January-April 1998.

Nutritional Advantages of Including More Beef, Lamb, and Chevron Meats in the National School Lunch Program. USDA, ERS, Feb. 1998.

Socioeconomic Determinants of Food Insecurity in the United States, Evidence from the SIPP and CSFII Datasets. TB-1869. USDA, ERS, Sept. 1998.

Two Decades of Excellence Annotated Bibliography: Research Accomplishments in the Areas of Food Assistance, Poverty and Well-Being, Food Choices, and Nutrition. USDA, ERS, June 1998.

USDA's Healthy Eating Index and Nutrition Information. TB-1866. USDA, ERS, April 1998.

October 1998

Table 1--The Economic Research Service Research (ERS) Extramural Research Studies: Fiscal 1998

Research Projects/Award	Objective	Estimated Cost
<i>Welfare Reform</i>		
Family Child Care Homes Legislative Change Study <i>(Congressionally Mandated)</i> Abt Associates, Inc.	Report to Congress on the effects of the new tiered meal reimbursements for family child care homes participating in the Child and Adult Care Feeding Program (CACFP) on sponsoring organizations, participating and dropout homes, and children.	\$1,959,007
Report to Congress on State Use of Funds to Increase Work Slots for Food Stamp Recipients <i>(Congressionally Mandated)</i> Health System Research	Report to Congress on the implications of the increased size of the Food Stamp Employment and Training (E&T) Program on participants, especially on unemployed able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) and descriptions of how States use E&T funds and recent changes in participation.	\$291,609
Report to Congress on Use of Food Stamps to Purchase Dietary Supplements <i>(Congressionally Mandated)</i> Life Sciences Research Organization	Report to Congress assessing the state of scientific knowledge regarding the potential value of vitamin and mineral supplements in filling nutrient gaps and the comparative impact of vitamin and mineral supplements, improved diets, and the intake of fortified foods on health status and health care costs.	\$120,250
Expanded Study of Welfare Reform on Immigrants Department of Health and Human Services	Determine the economic, social, nutritional, and health effects of changes in food stamp eligibility and other aspects of welfare reform on immigrants, their households, and communities. Interviews of households that were in the Urban Institute's National Survey of American Families will provide longitudinal information and a check on retrospective information on food stamp receipt, food security, and their relationship to economic, social, nutritional, and health outcomes.	\$300,000

Research Projects/Award	Objective	Estimated Cost
Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) – Leavers Use of Food Stamps Department of Health and Human Services	Determine the status of TANF recipients after they leave the TANF caseload, eligible families who are diverted before being enrolled in TANF, or eligible families who fail to enroll in TANF. The analysis will include former recipients/eligibles participating in the Food Stamp Program and the role that food stamps play in their overall wellbeing with particular focus on former recipients/eligibles that reside in nonmetropolitan areas. The analysis will address individuals' ability to obtain employment and the support provided by their earnings, public programs besides TANF and food stamps, and other programs.	\$250,000
Studies of Households Who Leave the Food Stamp Program Abt Associates, Inc., Mathematica Policy Research, Iowa State University, and South Carolina Department of Social Services	Determine the status of households and individuals who leave the Food Stamp Program. Of particular interest are able-bodied adults between the ages of 18 and 50 without dependents, (ABAWDs) because the Food Stamp Program changes were most strict for this group. The analysis will focus on individuals' ability to obtain employment, the support provided by their earnings and other income sources, and support provided by public and/or private programs.	\$1,498,074
A Study of U.S. Emergency Food Assistance System: Provider and Recipient Characteristics Mathematica Policy Research	To develop an understanding, through a nationally representative sample, of the characteristics, operating structure, and service areas of food banks, food pantries, and emergency kitchens and to provide national estimates of the total number of recipients served and the total quantity and type of food by source. This study provides policymakers a better understanding of the resource base of food banks, food pantries, and emergency kitchens and the capacity of these providers to manage current and future changes in food demand and food resources.	\$1,493,061
A Study of Changes in Food Stamp Program Administration Processes Related to Welfare Reform Health System Research	To study the extent and nature of States' welfare administrative re-engineering efforts as they affect the Food Stamp Program (FSP) administrative processes. This includes changes associated with: (1) welfare reform that effect either the interaction between food stamp applicants and caseworkers, or (2) the efficiency or the integrity of the FSP. The focus of the study will be on those parts of the States' administrative practices that are innovations (or departures) from prior practices.	\$362,443
<p>““““““</p> Research Linking Food Assistance Programs, Agriculture, Rural Areas, and the Economy Iowa State University, University of Oregon, and Mathematica Policy Research	To examine the linkages between food assistance programs and the general economy. In particular, to examine the characteristics of the welfare assistance packages being developed at the State level and assess the impact they may have on Federal food assistance program participation rates and expenditures.	\$672,399

Research Projects/Award	Objective	Estimated Cost
Simplified Food Stamp Program Technical Assistance Mathematica Policy Research	To conduct microsimulations and related analysis of alternative State-level changes to program options in the Simplified Food Stamp Programs and to evaluate the potential effects on program eligibility, participation, benefit levels, and costs.	\$88,389
<i>Food Security</i>		
Measuring Food Security: August 1998 CPS Supplement Census Bureau	To develop annual estimates of the prevalence of food security in the U.S. and to provide data for analysis of the determinants of and changes in the level of food security.	\$440,000
Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey—Kindergarten Cohort Department of Education	To include USDA's food security module and other items in the Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey-Kindergarten Cohort (ECLS-K), sponsored by the National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. The project will provide descriptive data on children's status at entry into school, children's transition into school, participation in the school breakfast and lunch programs, and their progress through fifth grade including data that allows for the examination of the relationship between food security/hunger, cognitive development and school performance.	\$500,000
Panel Study of Income Dynamics National Academy of Sciences	To improve the collection of longitudinal data on family composition, income, use of public assistance, food security, and factors associated with family self-sufficiency on the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID). To develop and modify survey questions to improve estimates of food expenditures, participation in food assistance programs, expenditures on major consumer goods and services, nutritional behavior, and the calculation of food stamp eligibility.	\$444,830
Research to Strengthen and Improve Measures of Food Security Iowa State University	To improve the measurement of food security and hunger at the household level by: (1) assessing changes in food security prevalence over time; (2) investigating alternative approaches for measuring food security items and classifying households into food security categories; and (3) developing and field testing a set of questions for future modifications of the food security scale.	\$100,000

Research Projects/Award	Objective	Estimated Cost
<i>Nutrition and Health</i>		
WIC and Childhood Development: Early Childhood Longitudinal Survey—Birth Cohort 2000 Department of Education	To support enhanced data collection necessary to examine the link WIC participation in infancy and childhood to cognitive development, obesity, and food security by adding a bank of questions to the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort (ECLS-B) conducted by the National Center for Educational Statistics, U.S. Department of Education. Added questions include WIC and other food assistance program participation, infant feeding practices, health care, height, weight, and related information.	\$200,000
Dietary and Nutrition Outcomes Harvard School of Public Health and Research Triangle, Inc.	To develop and evaluate dietary assessment tools for young children that can be used in WIC program centers, recognizing that adaptations may be needed for culturally diverse populations. The tools will serve several functions, including screening for dietary patterns that do not meet Federal dietary recommendations, facilitating the triage of patients for services, and serving as the basis for general nutrition education. The research will also improve assessment, policy analysis, and health outcomes on dietary intake	\$989,149
Research to Assess Links Between Diet Quality and Health Harvard School of Public Health	To analyze and improve our understanding of the relationship between diet quality and health status over time and to determine whether overall measures of diet quality such as the USDA Healthy Eating Index predict the occurrence of adverse health outcomes (such as cardiovascular disease, cancer, or death).	\$100,000
Research on Breastfed Infants' Growth World Health Organization	To conduct research on optimal growth rates for breastfed infants. WIC program clinicians require appropriate infant growth charts to determine when, and if, breastfeeding should be supplemented with formula to support weight gain. Current infant growth charts are based predominately on formula-fed infants and, hence, may suggest faster weight gains than optimal and unnecessary formula supplements.	\$800,000

Research Projects/Award	Objective	Estimate Cost
<i>Program Integrity and Effectiveness</i>		
Assessment of Computer Matching in the Food Stamp Program Mathematica Policy Research	To examine how States are currently using or planning to use computer-matching strategies to reduce fraud and abuse in their food stamp and other assistance programs. By collecting and disseminating information on computer matching, this project will help States improve program integrity and support FNS oversight to ensure that States manage the FSP as efficiently as possible.	\$342,269
The Evaluation of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Customer Service Waivers on Recipients Abt Associates, Inc.	To identify and estimate the occurrence of client service problems associated with EBT customer service waivers and assess how clients respond.	\$647,255
Nutrition and Health Outcomes of USDA Food and Nutrition Assistance Programs Abt Associates, Inc.	To improve and expand understanding of the effects of USDA's food and nutrition assistance programs on food consumption, nutrient availability and intakes, dietary quality, nutritional status, and health outcomes.	\$526,358
WIC Supplemental Food Package Analysis Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion, USDA	To review and assess the WIC food packages that pregnant and lactating women, infants, and children are currently offered to determine how well the packages meet supplementation needs of the target populations.	\$76,000

Research Projects/Award	Objective	Estimated Cost
<i>Research Outreach</i>		
Small Grant Research Programs	<p>To stimulate new and innovative research on food assistance programs and to broaden the participation of social science scholars in food assistance research. Five small grant programs have been established at academic institutions and affiliated research institutes. Each program focuses on a particular facet of food assistance, such as diet and health outcomes, relationships to poverty and wellbeing, rural issues, and special at-risk population groups. The five institutes and areas of focus are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The Joint Center for Poverty Research, University of Chicago and Northwestern University</u> awarded small grants on interactions between food assistance and other welfare programs, and linkages between the macroeconomy and food assistance. (\$262,740) • <u>The Southern Rural Development Center at Mississippi State University</u> awarded small grants for food assistance research on rural people, families, and communities in the South. The Center also initiated a dialogue among scholars through the establishment of a Rural South Food Assistance Research Task Force, with the purpose of further articulating research priorities on food assistance-related issues. (\$222,000) • <u>The University of Arizona, American Indian Studies Program</u> awarded small grants and is working with scholars at tribal colleges and elsewhere to support research addressing the unique issues and problems of Native Americans with respect to food assistance. (\$246,224) • <u>The University of California at Davis, Department of Nutrition</u> awarded small grants for research on the impact of food assistance programs on nutritional risk indicators (anthropometric, biochemical, clinical, and dietary), food purchasing practices, and food insecurity. This program seeks to encourage examinations of multiple indicators of nutrition impact, and interdisciplinary approaches integrating epidemiology, economics, or anthropology with nutrition. (\$225,024) • <u>The Institute for Research on Poverty at the University of Wisconsin</u> awarded research grants that address the effects of food assistance on individual and family wellbeing and food security. (\$234,834) 	\$1,190,851
Food and Nutrition Information Center National Agricultural Library	To provide support to the National Agricultural Library in systematically storing and disseminating information on USDA's food assistance programs, nutrition education and related nutrition issues; and hosting a website and list server.	\$110,000

Research Projects/Award	Objective	Estimated Cost
<i>Policy Research</i>		
WIC General Analysis Project Food and Nutrition Service, USDA	To conduct research and analysis of the WIC Program to support program and policy decisions, including research on (1) estimates of WIC eligibility, (2) changes in WIC participant characteristics over time, and (3) nutrient, health risk, and demographic characteristics of WIC participants and eligible nonparticipants.	\$500,000
Microsimulation and Related Analyses Food and Nutrition Service, USDA	To provide the simulations and related technical expertise needed to estimate the impact of proposed changes to the FSP. Other objectives include: maintaining and improving microsimulation capabilities, preparing databases, and conducting supporting research.	\$778,628
Child Nutrition Analytic Projects Food and Nutrition Service, USDA	To conduct research and analysis of USDA's child nutrition programs to support program and policy decisions, including research on (1) food and nutrient intake of school-age children, and (2) the contribution of child nutrition programs to food and nutrient intake.	\$460,000
<i>Enhanced Data Development</i>		
Continuing Survey of Food Intake by Individuals Agricultural Research Service, USDA	To improve estimates of low-income household food consumption in the United States by increasing the sample size of low-income individuals in the <i>Continuing Survey of Food Intake by Individuals (CSFII)</i> and developing and modifying survey questions related to food assistance programs.	\$1,250,000
National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey Department of Health and Human Services	To collect data on diet, food consumption, and health status as part of the <i>National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES)</i> by developing and modifying survey questions to improve the measurement of the relationship between diet and health for low-income individuals.	\$100,000
National Food Price and Sales Information System Food and Drug Administration	To purchase the most recent nationally reliable data on food prices, quantities, comparable volumes, dollar sales, and promotion information at the product group, class, brand, and item levels. The data system includes information on vitamin and mineral supplements.	\$235,000